



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF  
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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Chief Justice George Names Statewide Commission for Impartial Courts**

### ***Panel to Recommend Ways to Safeguard Judicial Quality, Impartiality, and Accountability***

San Francisco—Chief Justice Ronald M. George today announced the formation of a Commission for Impartial Courts to study and recommend ways to ensure judicial impartiality and accountability for the benefit of Californians.

The commission follows up on the work of last year's statewide Summit of Judicial Leaders, which was sponsored by the Judicial Council of California in the wake of threats against the independence of state judiciaries across the country.

"We are forming the Commission for Impartial Courts in response to developments in other states that have changed the tone, tenor, and cost of judicial elections," said Chief Justice George. "The manner in which judges are selected, retained, and removed from office can have a serious impact on the independence of the judiciary. It is essential that we make every effort to avoid politicizing the judiciary so that public confidence in the quality, impartiality, and accountability of judges is protected and maintained."

The commission will be led by an 18-member steering committee to be chaired by Associate Justice Ming W. Chin of the California Supreme Court. Members include justices and judges, court executive officers, attorneys, government and business officials, and members of the public.

Chief Justice George announced that the steering committee's official charge is to oversee and coordinate the work of four task forces, receiving periodic task force reports and recommendations, and to present its overall recommendations to the Judicial Council. The steering committee

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has a 24-month term, and its task forces have 18-month terms. The steering committee and task forces will meet for the first time September 10–11.

The four task forces are:

1. **The Task Force on Judicial Selection and Retention**, which will be chaired by Associate Justice Ronald B. Robie of the Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District (Sacramento). This 20-member task force will evaluate and make recommendations regarding proposals to improve the methods and procedures of selecting and retaining judges.
2. **The Task Force on Judicial Candidate Campaign Conduct**, which will be chaired by Associate Justice Douglas P. Miller of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two (Riverside). This 19-member task force will evaluate and make recommendations regarding proposals to promote ethical and professional conduct by judicial candidates.
3. **The Task Force on Judicial Campaign Finance**, which will be chaired by Judge William A. MacLaughlin of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. This 14-member task force will evaluate and make recommendations regarding proposals to better regulate campaign financing and advertising.
4. **The Task Force on Public Information and Education**, which will be chaired by Administrative Presiding Justice Judith D. McConnell of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District (San Diego). This 18-member task force will evaluate and make recommendations regarding proposals to improve public education and information about the judiciary, judicial elections, and judicial candidates.

The membership rosters of the steering committee and the four task forces are attached.

*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*

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# **Commission for Impartial Courts Steering Committee**

As of September 1, 2007

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California Supreme Court

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Scholar-in-Residence  
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Administrative Office of the Courts

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Regional Administrative Director  
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Administrative Office of the Courts

# **Task Force on Judicial Selection and Retention**

As of September 1, 2007

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Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi LLP

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**Mr. Seth S. Andersen**

Executive Vice President  
American Judicature Society

# **Task Force on Judicial Selection and Retention**

As of September 1, 2007

## **AOC LEAD COMMITTEE STAFF**

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Administrative Office of the Courts

# **Task Force on Judicial Candidate Campaign Conduct**

As of September 1, 2007

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Santa Clara County Bar Association

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# **Task Force on Judicial Candidate Campaign Conduct**

As of September 1, 2007

## **AOC LEAD COMMITTEE STAFF**

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# **Task Force on Judicial Campaign Finance**

As of September 1, 2007

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# **Task Force on Public Information and Education**

As of September 1, 2007

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